

Adapt

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Adapt

by [TheyArePackHunters](#)

Summary

Will and Hannibal adjust to living together. It goes about as well as anyone would expect.

EDIT: absolutely hate to admit it, but this is almost certainly abandoned. I wish I could give it the time it deserves, but since becoming a professional writer I've had no extra writing energy for fic. Thanks to everyone who read anyway! I do think you can enjoy the first few chapters as their own contained story.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Chapter 1

Will eyed his wineglass, and considered impulses. In another life he might have held it by the stem, tilting carefully and turning, watching the wine circle smooth and slow. Hardly a river, but calming in its contained way. Another time he might have drunk from it, his eyes never leaving Hannibal's face, all movement tapered into a reflection that he'd been so sure was conscious. So sure until Hannibal left, of course. He wouldn't have had a wine glass in front of him at all after that; instead it would have been whiskey in a normal cup or from the bottle, getting rid of that damn elegance that felt like nothing so much as a fingerprint, something obvious to any trained eye and more damning than the scar across his gut. In yet another life there'd been Molly. Mostly they didn't drink wine, but when they did his impulses were his own, and unbecoming.

He felt Hannibal's gaze harden, ever so slightly.

How the hell does he always know?

Because he's the devil. Answered Bedelia's cool voice, in his head.

Will didn't touch the wineglass, didn't acknowledge it as the weapon it was. Smooth for the moment, sheathed, but jagged in a second if he wanted.

He glanced up and immediately the edge dropped from Hannibal's eyes, replaced with curiosity and that particular kind of hunger Will had become far too familiar with over the past few weeks. It could only show up so often before Hannibal would want it satisfied.

"You're bored."

"I have never been bored with you, Will. I doubt I could be."

Will leaned back in his chair. He hadn't touched his food since Hannibal poured the wine, mentioning as he did that *Un ballo in maschera* was going to be performed in the city, a wonderful ensemble, the soul of Italy made music and with fascinating themes, among them the power temptation holds over even those of the highest moral temper, if not particularly those, because what is beautiful about a short fall, only a true dive grants vertigo, a sense of surrender as one takes power for oneself rather than for the principals one purports to promote, and wouldn't Will like to join him?

"I don't speak Italian."

Hannibal smiled and Will's hand twitched. *Jagged and at his throat in the time it would take to leap across the table.*

"Verdi has never been about the words."

"Un ballo in maschera is four hours long."

If Hannibal was surprised Will knew the opera, he didn't show it. "There will be a translation provided, I'm sure."

"In Spanish."

"Which you should be learning anyway."

Will looked away first, finally turning to his meal. He'd caught the trout just that afternoon, the third time he'd left Hannibal alone a full day since coming to Argentina. An act of trust. *And it had nothing to do with you going stir-crazy in this damn villa, or with you missing the ocean more than you miss Walter.* He didn't let himself think *more than Molly* though it was likely true. He couldn't miss either of them like he missed the water though; when you accept something as really, truly gone the pain of its absence takes on a different quality. *And when there's something new to replace what's lost that quality of pain dulls with alarming speed.* He didn't let himself wonder whether that applied more readily to Hannibal three years ago or Molly now.

"How long has the company been in La Plata?"

"Three weeks."

"We could have gone the night we arrived. Why now?"

"I thought we might take some time to settle out here. I didn't think you'd be comfortable with me roaming free in the city."

"So you went when I was fishing."

Hannibal tilted his head, looking almost hurt. "I wouldn't lie to you."

"No, but you've always considered lies and dishonesty distinct creatures."

"I haven't gone anywhere you wouldn't want me to be, Will. I heard about the performance at the market in town."

If he was lying he wasn't about to admit it, so Will let it go.

"Have you already bought tickets?"

Hannibal smiled. "That would be awfully presumptuous of me."

"You bought us a house."

"This isn't the sort of region where one rents. It would have attracted attention."

"You just want to renovate the back patio."

"I see no reason to live without a swimming pool when our environment is so agreeable to one."

Will took a bite of fish to hide his smile. "Hm. How are our seats?"

"Left orchestra."

"Center too noticeable?"

Hannibal sniffed, clearly offended at the idea that he'd sacrifice the quality of their night at the opera for something so mundane as maintaining their cover. Will took another bite of fish. "Center was sold out for the next month."

"Naturally. Must be an excellent ensemble."

"I think you would be particularly partial to the contralto. A voice like velvet, cuts clean through the orchestra. The power of such music leaves no room for one's own thoughts," he added, after a pause. There was a question to the words, something about necessity and desire and the denial of either or both in art and in action.

"I'll embarrass you in front of your inevitable socialite following."

Hannibal cocked his head with mock innocence. "Following?"

"Would you prefer flock?"

"Hardly so innocent as lambs."

"Perhaps sounder is a more appropriate term."

Hannibal grinned and took a bite of fish. "I doubt I'll have any complaints. I never have before."

Will surprised himself with a laugh at that. His back still ached in the mornings from where it had been slammed into the rocks of the cliff after their fall, though his cheek and shoulder were healing well. Of course there would be a scar. He didn't mind much though; aside from with Molly, he'd rarely seen much benefit to being handsome. If anything his new scar-to-be would waylay any potentially lethal if exceedingly mild interest some poor woman might level in his direction. Will had no delusions on that count, at least: Hannibal had him, and he had no intention of sharing.

Besides, no one from the FBI would be looking for a man with a gruesome scar down his cheek.

"Will?"

Will put down his fork. "You're going to have to take me suit shopping, I think."

He had never met anyone else whose eyes could literally sparkle with glee. *Guess that should have been a sign from the beginning.*

His inner voice snorted at him, but refrained from pointing out the thousand other things that should have tipped him off. Starting with—

“It would be my pleasure,” Hannibal fairly purred, smiling a wolf’s smile.

—that. Every single thing about that.

#

Though the low-level ache never went away, had yet to go away, Will missed his old life most at night. On the boat things had been different, everything had been pain and need, with no room for propriety. There’d been doubt, of course, heavy doubt about untraceable phone calls or maybe a note so personal surely Molly wouldn’t share it with Jack, no matter... They’d written their own vows. “And I promise not to hold you together, but to patch you up when you fall apart. Every time.” The ceremony had been just Walter, Molly’s sister Kate, and a few of Molly’s friends. She’d wanted to invite Alana and Margot, just to have someone from Will’s life there. She’d argued that it was good to talk to others who’d shared his trauma. That avoiding it all would only bite him in the ass one day.

He’d wanted to explain that they couldn’t come not because they shared a trauma, but because they didn’t; because he was their trauma. He shared nothing with them. Alana had taken Chilton’s old position. It cost her nothing to think of Hannibal languishing in the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. She’d testified extensively at his trial, shared Hannibal’s use of Will’s encephalitis with the court and by extension with the media, with Freddie Lounds, who had been only too happy to run with the implications of Will drugged and helpless in Hannibal the Cannibal’s clutches, to extrapolate from the suggestive imagery of injection and force-feeding.

Will hadn’t wanted any of that any more on the record than it already was. It was private, and it wasn’t like they didn’t have a conviction thirty times over. Still, he shouldn’t have been surprised to find out Alana felt differently.

Will had been in court that day. He’d been expected to testify. He’d meant to keep to his stream until he was on the witness stand—ignore Hannibal, whose gaze hadn’t so much as flickered towards the judge or the jury or any of the people deciding his fate, ignore that even now it felt less like a threat than something reliable, an anchor streamed behind him in heavy weather. But he wouldn’t meet Hannibal’s eye, because this was all Hannibal’s fault, his petty, manipulative, over-confident fault, and Will would not give him the satisfaction.

He wouldn’t risk the exposure.

Until all of a sudden Alana was describing a patient undergoing induced seizures and time loss, his career and his life put at risk, and one of the lawyers was asking if she was referring to Will Graham, and she was not hesitating, icy at the disregard for her cursory attempt to maintain Will’s privacy, but resolute. She wanted every one of Hannibal’s crimes on record. Will understood it. He forgave her for it.

But in the moment he panicked, and his eyes snapped to Hannibal’s.

He couldn’t forgive anyone involved for that.

There'd been a positive avalanche of expressions when Will met his eyes, starting somewhere near elation, resentment, and hurt before giving way quickly to fury at whatever he saw on Will's face. It was the only time during the entire day that he looked away from Will. Hannibal caught Alana's eye then, and she glared right back at him, not pausing in her point. But he must have made something clear, because she refrained from mentioning Will again for the rest of the trail except when absolutely necessary.

Will knew, because he watched the proceedings on TV, where he could observe Hannibal as intently as he wanted without having to worry about consequences.

Alana sent him a letter of apology. It was unnecessary, but he'd kept it all the same. Molly had probably seen it, in his box of Stuff You Can Look Through Because We Have No Secrets But There Is No Need To Talk About It Please.

Alana and Margot could talk about it. Could talk to Molly about it.

So no, they could not be at his wedding. For these and a thousand other reasons.

Molly had pushed when all he said was no, but when he shook his head and wouldn't meet her eyes she drew him close to her and let it go.

That was gone now. Forever.

The first time Will had asked to contact her, Hannibal had been polite, even sympathetic. The second time he'd been somewhat colder. The third time he'd suggested they stop by and leave a message in person, if Will felt it so necessary.

That had been after two weeks on the boat, and the first time since the fall that Will tried to kill Hannibal. It was a short fight. Afterward Hannibal's smug pleasure had been a near physical force on the boat. It was almost enough to make Will try again, but by the time Hannibal had finished restitching his back the urge had passed. He was left to restitch Hannibal's bullet wound. Hannibal had shrugged out of his button-up—there were no suits on the boat—and Will had seen to the entry wound first before kneeling before Hannibal to tend to the messier exit wound. He'd rested an elbow on Hannibal's thigh when his arm grew tired, and said nothing not because he had nothing to say but because his throat still ached from Hannibal's grip.

Of course Hannibal wouldn't have strangled him. Shoved up against the rail of the boat, suspended over the water, even in the moment Will knew that Hannibal used the grip on his neck to tether him to the deck. A cold, hard fall to the water would have been his reward if he'd managed to break free.

As soon as he stopped fighting, Hannibal let him down and began to care for his injuries.

The FBI declared them dead not two days later, along with the smaller, quieter announcement of Agent Jack Crawford's retirement. One couldn't have come without the other, Will knew. In order for Jack not to be arrested as an accessory, Will needed to be a hero, which meant Will needed to be dead. Another reason it was safe to send Molly a message: even if she did reach out to Jack with it, Jack wouldn't risk prison reporting it. And confirming to Jack that

they were alive wouldn't hurt anything either, because Jack would either hunt them or he wouldn't; it would have no more to do with the evidence of their survival than with their status on the FBI database.

Relaying these thoughts to Hannibal, Will talked around the message to Molly.

"Are you suggesting we announce our presence in some way, Will?"

"There is no reason to goad the FBI. You already got the one thing they had that you wanted."

Hannibal had grinned, an almost boyish expression, not half as predatory as Will had expected. He somehow always seemed to forget how thoroughly charmed Hannibal could be by this sort of conversation.

"Of course. A private announcement, then. To Jack alone? If he's going to hunt us, let him do so with some confidence in his own sanity."

"Surprisingly compassionate."

"I believe all actions should work towards multiple goals. It is possible Jack's happiness is a secondary goal, in this case."

Will had taken a drink of wine after that, and let the conversation lull for a long minute, before asking if Hannibal would help him with his Spanish after dinner. Hannibal hadn't pushed.

It was easier, in those times. Night meant sleep, often with Hannibal no more than a foot or two away, and after his suggestion Will had made a significant effort not to so much as think about Molly in Hannibal's presence. And when Hannibal wasn't a foot or two away, well, somehow on those nights Molly didn't cross his mind at all.

But in the villa Hannibal slept down the hall, and it was only a matter of time before Will began to think about things other than him in his absence. Walter. His dogs. Molly. Being useful, being uncomplicated, being loved and loving without any threat of violence—he caught the thought and stared at it, lying in bed. He wasn't surprised at the essence of it, but rather at how normal it felt. They loved each other. It was a threatening love. It was love.

He'd never thought it out in so many words, somehow.

File under: Things to Consider Later.

For now, he was considering Molly. Who'd he'd been with her, who he'd been before, and who he'd be now. The distinctions felt arbitrary, manufactured. He'd given them to her as gifts, at some point or other. Nothing she'd expected or asked for, but he'd wanted her to be the thing that changed him. In many ways she was.

Then again, certain changes had already been set in motion.

Where does the difference between the past and the future come from?

He didn't miss his old life at night; he mourned it. And he did so alone.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal go to the opera.

(I promise there's gonna be a bit of actual action next chapter! Well, probably, though from just these two chapters I've already found that trying to predict Will is often pretty pointless.)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Will was nervous. Of course he hid it well, moving with slow precision, keeping his voice low and even. Just as he had when he visited Hannibal at the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. And, as before, the carefully tailored mannerisms spoke to Hannibal as clearly as Will himself ever had.

Hannibal didn't bother to hide a small smile. 'Spoke' might be the wrong word. Perhaps 'grumbled' would be a more appropriate fit, or 'whined'. Something with a hint of petulance. Despite his initial offer, Will had opted for a cerulean blue silk shirt and slacks in place of a suit. Hannibal would have preferred him in something tailored, as he was sure Will knew, but the color at least made him easy to track in the crowd of black and navy, as he wove his way towards the bar. Not that Hannibal would ever need such assistance picking him out of a crowd, but Hannibal hadn't brought them to the opera simply to take in a show. He leaned against the balustrade, scanning the chattering assemblage below him, and Will's bright flash of blue. A man had noticed Will, had glanced in his direction twice—three times now.

Behind Hannibal, Claire hovered. She'd been the first of her clique to approach him and Will, hardly five minutes after the curtain closed on the first act.

Will had been far more engrossed in the opera than Hannibal had dared to hope. He'd had to tap him on the knee to bring him out of his thoughts as the lights came up.

"Enjoying yourself?"

Will had nodded, but waited a moment before he said, "You're still not getting any actual commentary out of me. It's powerful. I don't have the vocabulary for more than that."

"We aren't in a lecture hall, Will. I require nothing but your presence, and your enjoyment."

Which was about when Claire had happened over. She'd been charming and intelligent and along with her friends had made Will supremely uncomfortable and wonderfully surly, providing Hannibal with an excuse to send him after drinks. Will had undoubtedly seen it as

an escape, and it was. As Hannibal had said before, an action should always work towards multiple goals.

Simple for Hannibal to excuse himself after that, and make his way over to the balcony. He'd watched with fond amusement as Will hesitated at the edge of the press on the main floor before squaring his shoulders and shoving through. A few women followed him with their eyes. A brunette even moved towards him, clearly intent on some sort of interaction. At the edge of his vision Hannibal saw Claire break away from the friends he had left her with. Will reached the bar, and the man that had glanced towards him three times so far was now half listening to a friend talk animatedly about something or other. He glanced again. Hannibal was reasonably sure he wasn't about to do anything stupid though, and Claire was still hovering with her circle of friends. He could feel her curiosity.

Hannibal watched Will for just one more moment, watched as he leaned an elbow against the wood, his shirt pulling tight across his shoulders. Finally sensing Hannibal's gaze—or finally annoyed enough to acknowledge it—Will shot a glare over his shoulder, catching Hannibal's eye just long enough to make it clear how unamused he was by all of this before turning pointedly away from the brunette woman who'd reached him and was just about to attempt to engage him in conversation.

Hannibal got his inner smile under control before turning to find Claire considering him unabashedly. He might have found such an open stare rude in most cases, but hers held neither lust nor any other clear intention; it was much the same expression one might wear when appraising a complex work of art. He smiled, and nodded an invitation. She came to lean beside him against the balcony.

“The observed of all observers?”

Hannibal surprised himself with a laugh. “Mr. Kassandros, or myself?”

Claire smiled, pleased her quote had been recognized. “I meant you, though now that you mention it your friend may fit the role even better. You seem entirely aware of how observed you are, while he remains oblivious.”

“Do you think Hamlet was truly unaware of the attention he drew?”

She dipped her head in acknowledgement. “I think it depends on the production.”

He shifted somewhat closer. “In your production?”

That drew a bit of a blush from her, to Hannibal's satisfaction. Not that he had any interest, but these games had marks of success and concession, and it was delightful to score a touch against a clearly skilled partner. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Will leave the bar. The brunette woman made no move to follow him.

“In my production, Hamlet is too busy pulling strings to notice his puppet show has drawn an audience.”

“In that case I think I’d have to concede the role to Mr. Kassandros. I always keep my audience in mind, for any performance. Though I must admit, I’ve never been much of a puppet master.”

“Oh really?”

“I find puppets far too stiff. Hard to make engaging theater when you are the only true performer.”

She laughed. “Fair enough. What do you do then, if you don’t mind my asking? An actor... or a director? You don’t strike me as someone who merely consumes art.”

“He’s a seasoned dilettante.”

Hannibal knew his grin was more than friendly, but he couldn’t care less as he turned to greet Will. Of course he’d scented his approach, but he hadn’t wanted to pull him into the conversation without his consent. He accepted the wine Will offered him. It was in a plastic cup. *Even at the opera...* Yet his distaste was easy to set aside, with Will standing so near and looking at him with that dangerous, beautiful energy that meant he knew now why they were at the opera.

“Not truly an expert in anything,” Will continued, looking straight at Hannibal as he spoke, “but he plays at the appearance of craft well enough to fool most.”

“But not you?” Claire asked, apparently more curious than alarmed at the weight of Will’s words, at the intensity he wasn’t bothering to hide. Hannibal wondered how it read to her. Anger? Lust? Something nameless, ancient and powerful, of which she knew better than to claim recognition?

“No. Not me.”

“Will’s developed a tolerance to my appearances,” Hannibal offered, breaking eye contact to smile at Claire. Will took the suggestion without hesitation.

“You develop tolerance against a toxin.”

“Toxins often make the best medicines, for those strong enough to survive them.”

“And those not strong enough were never meant to survive at all?”

“Those not strong enough would hardly appreciate surviving my appearances, wouldn’t you say?”

Claire laughed, a breathless sort of thing, looking back and forth between the two of them.

“Will you two be here all night? Because if so I think I’ll skip the rest of the opera.”

Will shifted, glancing around as though just remembering the rest of the world. Looking for the man he must have noticed noticing him. Hannibal considered placing a hand on Will’s shoulder or elbow to tether him; he had an interesting habit of freezing at Hannibal’s touch. It would at least keep him still long enough—

Ah, but isn't that the very manipulation you swore you wouldn't indulge in after his second attempt on your life, on the boat? Straightforward and open.

The wind had been powerful that night, almost a storm. Will's eyes had flashed with real intent even as Hannibal held him over the waves, feeling Will's pulse hammer beneath his grip. His other arm had been wrapped around Will's waist, keeping him steady. The spray had them both soaked, and to prevent a slip he'd had to pull Will close, and if the rail had dug into Will's lower back, forcing him to arch up, well, that could hardly be considered Hannibal's fault...

But he kept his promises. *Straightforward and open.*

He placed a hand at the small of Will's back, and felt his companion go completely still. Hannibal smiled for Claire, ignoring the eyes now locked on him.

"I'm afraid we don't do public performances very often," he said with a laugh. "I'm sure we'd love to have you for dinner though, if you don't mind a bit of a drive out of the city."

Before she could respond Will's lips twisted, and about twenty singular expressions flitted across his face in the time it took for him to finally look away from Hannibal and meet this stranger's eyes. "Don't let him fool you. He's not half as interesting as he seems."

The lights flickered. Hannibal schooled his features as Will spun on his heel, slipping away from the press of Hannibal's hand at his back, and stalked back to their seats. Always so elegant in his cruelty.

At his elbow Claire hesitated, unsure what to say to smooth things over. Something hard and bright flared in Hannibal's chest. She was, not pitying him precisely, but sympathizing. As though Will had hurt him. As though Hannibal didn't find his anger intoxicating, as though he'd be so petty as to hold a grudge against something so beautiful, so righteous. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead*. He'd need to find another buzzing socialite to pose beside her, someone equally forgettable, equally pointless. He'd take her tongue and her mind, leave the rest to the worms.

It was an impulsive thought.

"My apologies," he said, surprised at how quiet his voice was, how thick his accent. "Another trait he shares with the late prince."

"Dramatic flare?"

Hannibal gave her a smile, but he knew it was not a pretty thing to see. "A love for grudges, guilt, and indecision that borders on the unholy." Will would have reached their seats by now. His anger would have cooled enough to allow some surprise that Hannibal hadn't followed straight away. "...though it is lovely." Or maybe not. Maybe he'd stolen a corkscrew or a penknife from the bar. *An alarmingly comforting thought*. "I do hope you enjoy the rest of the show, and take me up on that dinner invitation," Hannibal said, just as Claire opened her mouth to say something. Without waiting for her to respond, he flashed a pleasant smile and went after Will.

At their seats Will was quiet. The lights flickered again.

“We’re leaving at the next intermission.”

Hannibal swallowed, confused at his own relief. “*Un ballo in maschera* doesn’t really show its colors until the third act. I had hoped you would stay.”

He watched Will bite back some retort at that. He’d styled his hair for Hannibal, but in his anger he must have pushed a hand through the carefully arranged curls. They hung past his eyebrows. Maybe he’d let Hannibal cut them, when they became unmanageable. *In a few weeks, maybe a month.* The thought lessened the knot in his chest. *If he were going to leave he would have left after you threatened—* He didn’t think *that woman* because it was childish to avoid her name, only a name like any other, less than many others in fact, void of any music or interesting connotations—

He stopped himself again. The lights dimmed for the final time, and the singers began to take their places about the stage. Hannibal watched Will. Just as the opening notes of Amelia’s aria began to rise from the orchestra, he decided he couldn’t wait through the whole act, wondering. He leaned close, and whispered against Will’s ear.

“Why not leave now?”

Will turned to give him a considering look. He was still furious, but the hard, unyielding fury he’d spoken to Claire with was gone, replaced by something rippling, something Hannibal had seen before. It lay hot under Will’s skin and behind his eyes, pulling him in all directions at once. But Will shook his head, and pursed his lips in a silent shush. Then, slowly, he leaned over, mirroring Hannibal’s earlier posture, and whispered close against his ear, “It’s rude to interrupt the performance.”

Hannibal didn’t repress the shiver that sent through him. In the dark of the theater, with the vibration of the orchestra thrumming through the floor and the smell of Will so tantalizingly close, for an instant he was tempted to turn and nuzzle against Will’s neck, inhale at the corner of his jaw. Will hadn’t shaved that day, and his skin would be rough with stubble. Hannibal could practically feel the slight rasp of it, practically smell how heady Will’s scent would be so close, undiluted by that atrocious aftershave. Of course he refrained. It was nothing but a fleeting impulse.

They could leave after the second act. Their tail-to-be might not follow them if they left early, but Hannibal hoped he’d at least be intelligent enough to find out their names, and with that their address.

And if not there would be other nights. Other shows. They had a whole lifetime of events he would research ahead of time, a lifetime of dates carefully picked to coincide with the schedule of this or that ex-patriot, people who might know their faces. If Will wanted their prey to slip away tonight, Hannibal would abide by his wishes, as much as he could.

They were partners now, after all, and he wouldn’t want to do anything to make Will needlessly uncomfortable.

Chapter End Notes

Hannibal's dialogue is the most fun to write. If I could write nothing else forever, there's a pretty strong chance I would.

Oh, and Hamlet is described as "the observed of all observers" in the opening act of *Hamlet*. This whole thing may be influenced by my deep and driving need to have Hugh Dancy play Hamlet. (Seriously, think about it, it'd be **so good**.)

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal go for a drive and have a talk. Will refuses every single instruction I give him, and has a light and happy dream

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“No.” It was the first word Will had spoken since the start of the second act, and it came out much harsher than he meant it. Hannibal froze at the driver’s side door, looked to him expectantly. “You are not driving.”

“You’re afraid I’ll force a confrontation.”

“No need to be afraid of what’s already been done.”

“Isn’t there?”

“I just need to think. I need to focus.” *I need something to keep me grounded, and since that apparently still can’t be you, you asshole, it’s going to have to be the car.*

Hannibal inclined his head, catching something in Will’s tone that made him look almost contrite. “Of course.”

It hadn’t worked. They’d left as the second act ended, and the man that had noticed Will simply followed them. Bad luck that he’d glanced across the room just as Hannibal was opening the lobby door for Will. Bad luck again that Will had chosen that moment to glance back, and accidentally caught his eye. In that instant, the man knew that they knew that he knew. If not for that, they might have left without incident and the whole thing would have come to nothing but an argument.

Nothing but an argument. Because those are always so easy with you two.

And it wouldn’t have been only an argument anyway. He’d have asked around, found out your names, where you live. It would only have been a matter of time.

Or maybe the man had been terrified that he recognized them. Maybe he wouldn’t have done anything with the information. Stayed quiet out of fear.

That would be smart. Staying quiet, pretending not to have seen anything.

No, it really wouldn’t.

Will and Hannibal both pretended not to notice a car rev to life at the other end of the lot as soon as their headlights turned on.

Five minutes and they were turning onto a long stretch of empty road. The night was soft. A calm sky, warm moon.

Like slipping into an old skin. The way Will had dealt with Hannibal, at the beginning of the second act. *Panic can cause unstable personalities to fall back on old patterns of behavior.* Panic can do that to anyone. And if the behavior's effective... *Honest even, in its way.* He felt himself clamp down on that thought out of habit, ready to tear it out and toss it aside, before he remembered that there was hardly any point in all that anymore. He let the truth slip away. *Let it pop up later, some really inconvenient time. In court, maybe, after—*

He came up short. Now *there* was a thought worth avoiding.

He flared his hands flat against the leather of the wheel, looking away from the road for a moment. A controlled gesture. Not a fidget. He allowed his grip to tighten again, and then a bit more, until his knuckles were white and he was glad the road hadn't begun to wind yet.

In his own damn head and still dodging the face of the thing.

Like that's new.

Hannibal was staring at him, absolutely avid.

Will took a slow breath, and decided it might be a fit punishment not to say anything to him the entire car ride. Of course as soon as he came to this conclusion a thousand irrepressible questions barreled straight through him, running over and across each other. He was surprised at the one that stumbled forward from the mass. "Who is he?"

"A retired cop, from Delaware," Hannibal said, without hesitation. "He worked in private security for a few years before coming to La Plata."

"How did you know he'd be there?"

"Does it matter?"

"Yes."

"In that case I did not know; I suspected. After hearing about the opera at the market I looked into it, and it occurred to me to look into the members of the opera house that might be attending. However, it was all online. I did not leave you for the city."

Will's eyes flicked to their review mirror. The man was a poor tail.

"Does he have any particular reason to want us caught?"

"I believe Alana has offered a reward for a positive ID. It's quite substantial."

"And a cop's pension isn't exactly grand."

Hannibal hummed his agreement.

Will wouldn't be able to lose him. They had reached the mountains that cut their villa away from the rest of the world, and the road had begun to wind. He couldn't safely go much faster around the curves, and even if he could, to what purpose? He'd been speeding the whole drive and it hadn't gotten rid of— "What's his name?"

"Michael Pont."

So what then. A bribe? They wouldn't be able to come near to matching whatever Alana had offered. Would a threat be sufficient? *Hannibal could be... intimidating.* He let out a bark of laughter—a hard, desperate thing that Hannibal didn't question and he didn't explain.

"He'll follow us to the house."

"Yes."

"I could lead him somewhere else, but it wouldn't help anything, would it?"

Hannibal was quiet so long Will risked a glance away from the road despite their speed and the sharp turns. The indecision on Hannibal's face was unsettling. He caught himself staring just in time to jerk the wheel and keep them clinging to the mountainside. *Slight variation on throwing us off a cliff.*

Hannibal gave him a small smile, as though he'd heard the thought as it passed through Will's head.

"He'll likely follow us until morning, when he can get a clear photo."

Will had the sudden, ridiculous urge to pull over at the next shoulder. He wasn't sure what he would do if the man stopped as well, but it was his only option other than driving and he knew what driving would get him.

When they reached the villa Will didn't bother to glance back and see where their tail—Michael Pont—had settled. He wasn't far down the road. Will could hear his car idling in the quiet of the night.

Will said nothing as Hannibal unlocked the door. He ignored Hannibal's hesitation, the hitch of some aborted comment as Will pushed past him. He went straight to his bedroom, slammed the door, and immediately felt like a teenager.

Well, what did you expect?

He stripped down to his boxers and threw on a white t-shirt, climbed into bed. Ignored the unease that told him he should stay dressed. That he wasn't going to sleep that night, so why pretend? Wasn't the whole point of this that he'd stopped lying to himself about these things?

No. The thought had real force behind it. *The whole point of this— there is no point to this. It just happened. It just is.*

He closed his eyes. Twisted onto his side. Kicked off his covers, and then his sheets. Onto his other side. Realized he was clenching his jaw and forced the muscles to relax. Had the same realization three more times before flipping to his back, and pulling the sheets back on. He lay still. He would sleep if he just lay still.

*

With Molly, in the kitchen. She's making a salad and loves him as much as he loves her, and says something exasperated about his hair, and won't he ever get it cut? He runs a hand through it and it's wet, and he says that's not a cutting problem but she just laughs. Of course it is. It's a choice, isn't it? He insists it'll dry if she just gives him a bit of time, but no, he knows that must be true because that's how time works but also it's a lie, feels like a lie and her face falls because she knows too, and he goes cold, fidgety, his hair suddenly stuck to his forehead and the back of his neck—though it must have been like that all along—but he doesn't brush it away because she wants him to and there's no point.

Suddenly she's against him and brushing it away for him, running her hands through it, and he knows why she shouldn't—it's so obvious and how did he not smell it before?—and as she's brushing it away he's also grabbing her wrists and shaking her, screaming at her, because she'll get blood everywhere, everywhere, and what about the salad, but he's also cowering against the counter pulling away from her, and now the blood's pouring salty and hot from his cheek as well, filling his mouth, and she's begging something but he can't hear because there's nothing but the sound of breathing.

The chest beneath his cheek rises and falls. It's warm, and he's safe. There is nothing more he has to do. Nothing he has to change. He didn't, but this time he sobs at the relief of it. His resting place.

There's no reason to worry about bloodstains here.

*

Will woke gasping.

He rolled out of bed and staggered to his door.

No point at all.

The hall was dark, but he knew his way.

Then you threw both of you off a cliff.

A relief, an accusation, a protest, guilt.

Hannibal's door looked closed, but Will fell against it and it must have been ever so slightly ajar because it swung open and slammed against the far wall and Will collapsed into the room with a curse.

“Will?”

“Shut up!”

He felt drunk. He wasn't. The fall to the floor had pulled him the rest of the way out of his dream, and he probably had a few very definite things he wanted to say. His sleep-addled brain was still catching up though, and meanwhile his body had made its way to Hannibal's bed and was standing at the edge. His fingers itched for a knife. He could straddle Hannibal and hold it to his throat. That felt right.

Without the knife he'd just be—

Hannibal looked up at him, technically obeying his request for silence. But they'd never really needed words at moments like this, and his eyes glinted with that inhuman glee.

Will could strangle him.

Only if you actually strangle him. Otherwise it's just your hands around his throat.

Suddenly he just didn't have the energy. He sat heavily on the edge of the bed, and buried his head in his hands.

Hannibal moved quickly, rising behind Will to place a hand on his shoulder, but stopped before he could complete the motion.

Will didn't move. He couldn't tell Hannibal it was fine, because it wasn't. None of it. Not his touch, not his presence, not the man waiting outside their house to take a photo of them and...

“I don't think Alana would have you killed.”

Will's head jerked up and he whipped around to stare at Hannibal, eyes wide. “What?”

Hannibal sat back against the headboard, pulling out of his personal space with visible effort. “She tried incarceration with me once, and failed. I doubt she'll try again. But you have made no threats to her personally, or to her wife or child. I believe she would let you live.”

“You threatened her.”

“I made a promise.”

Will could imagine. In prison, bored, Hannibal would have had little to do other than remind Alana how temporary it all was. Her fear would have been a reassurance as much as a satisfaction.

“And that's why she's put a bounty on us.”

“On a positive ID. She knows any amateur attempts to catch us would simply give us warning to slip away.” Hannibal let the irony sit for a moment.

“She'll have her own team for capture, then.”

Hannibal hesitated. "In all likelihood she has several."

Not afraid of delivering bad news, but unsure if this is the proper time to brag. Will snorted at the thought, and Hannibal quirked an eyebrow.

"You couldn't drop her a line, let her know the deal's off?"

"I always keep my promises, Will." Hannibal held his gaze as he spoke.

Will felt like laughing, at first because this was all actually such a simple problem, and then because *oh god, how can this feel like a simple problem?* Which was quickly answered with the obvious *well, because this is the man you chose to run away with.*

*Okay, fine, the man you've **somehow** ended up here with. Better?*

Yes, actually.

"Do you imagine I would kill her with you?" As he said the words he remembered their reality, and all the humor fell out of him.

"No," Hannibal admitted.

"Do you want to leave me to go kill her?"

"I don't have any immediate—"

"Do you want to?"

"Not at the moment, no."

"But in some future moment."

"Life is... unpredictable."

"If you kill her, or Margot, or harm their child in any way, you destroy this." Will watched a thought of Abigail flash across Hannibal's face, but he didn't give it voice. *Smart.* The thought had teeth. Will didn't bother to hide it. "So tell me, *Hannibal*, in what moment could your vendetta possibly be worth that?"

To his credit, Hannibal didn't flinch. "Once you have left me, or once you are dead."

Will stared at him, clutching for the anger he'd had a moment ago. "You... never told me that."

"You would have considered it blackmail." It wasn't an accusation, and Will didn't try to argue. He didn't try to promise that he would never leave, because it would be ridiculous, or that he wouldn't die, because it would be doubly so. He said the only thing he could think to say, realizing it as the words left his mouth and wondering how he had forgotten in the first place.

“If you told her you were done with her, she probably wouldn’t believe you anyway.”

Hannibal smiled and Will was very, very glad he hadn’t had a knife when he stumbled in, because he didn’t have the faintest idea how to comfort Hannibal and tear the melancholy out of that smile, but holding a knife to his throat probably wouldn’t have helped. Hannibal might have enjoyed it, but it wouldn’t have helped. “It seems unlikely.”

Will stood up and began to walk around Hannibal’s room. Not pacing. This was slow, taking his bearings. He let his hand trail along the ornate windowsill. The wood was cold and hard as stone.

“Okay.” The arms of the wooden chairs on their porch used to get like that in winter.

On Molly’s porch.

Who are you kidding, she probably moved, after all that.

Will was running his fingers over a carved swirl. He stopped and walked back across the room, felt the urge to close the door but didn’t. It wasn’t like the man was waiting for them in the hall. “Okay.” *Pont something. Michael Pont.* He turned to Hannibal, who was still sitting up against the headboard, watching him. “Other than murder, any ideas?”

Hannibal raised an eyebrow. “You can’t think of anything?”

“We can’t match her bribe.” He was surprised at how calm he sounded. He began pacing again. “We could try to intimidate him but it wouldn’t work in the long term. Same for holding him. We could stay in the villa for a time, but eventually he’ll set up cameras trained on the doors and windows. For now he’s still too afraid, and parked far enough that most cameras won’t have a strong enough flash to get a clean shot of us leaving the house to get to our car. But once we’re driving, he’ll be able to follow us until daylight breaks and get a picture of us driving. Unless we want to crash into the jungle, there’s no way to throw a tail on our way out of the mountain.”

Hannibal looked honestly offended. “You think I bought a house with only one exit.”

Will froze. “...Didn’t you?”

Hannibal gave him a considering look. He didn’t say, *You must have really wanted to kill him to convince yourself of that*, but only because they both knew that they were both thinking it. To his mild horror, Will felt a flush creeping across his face.

Hannibal stood. Will was suddenly very aware that he was in nothing but a clinging, sweat-soaked shirt and boxers. Hannibal looked regal in sleep pants and no shirt, naturally.

“There’s a footpath leading down the back of the mountain. We’ll have to drive past him, but we should be able to outpace him and turn onto the dirt road, where we can leave the car. We’ll walk down the mountain the rest of the way to the water, where I have an emergency boat moored. There is another safe house set up in the south of the country.” He took slow steps towards Will, until he was standing at his side. “Did you imagine I would force you?”

Will shook his head, hyper aware of how close Hannibal was. “I don’t think you would ever see it that way. There is always a choice.”

Hannibal canted his head to the side. “Not always.”

“Killing is not an involuntary act.”

For the second time in one night Will sensed Hannibal’s temptation to mention Abigail. This time he felt no fury at the consideration, only relief at its rejection.

When he felt Hannibal’s hand on his shoulder he jumped.

“You can’t stray now, Will. Fate is fickle, and will only be denied by gods and men who match her in charm and inconstancy.” Hannibal moved to stand directly in front of him, trying to catch his eye. “To dwell on lost battles is to fight an illusive foe.”

Will met his gaze evenly. “Already shifted on to new games.” Not pausing to question why he did it Will shifted closer, not quite closing the distance between them, but enough that he could feel Hannibal tense in surprise. Out of nowhere Will remembered his dream. How the relief had ached like a wound, like something raw and open. He placed a hand against Hannibal’s chest, where his head had rested before, neither pulling him closer nor pushing him away.

“And if we can’t lose him? If he follows us?”

Hannibal closed his eyes for a moment and swallowed. When he spoke his voice was rough, accent thick. “Go pack, Will. We’ll leave in fifteen minutes.”

You...

Will nodded, and didn’t let himself finish the thought until he was back in his room.

He wants to kiss you.

Will shivered.

Pants. Gotta find pants. And a not-sweat-soaked shirt.

He thought of the rest of the dream, Molly’s tear-streaked face flashing through his mind, her hands bloody from his hair. *At least you know how you feel about that*, grumbled some part of him. He glared at the thought sharply. *I know how I feel about all of it.*

For once all the voices in his head agreed, their laughter ringing out in unison.

I wanted sexy fighting times this chapter. Will was going to straddle Hannibal, there would be knives and no shirts, and panting, probably some hair pulling... but then Will just refused to cooperate and this got long, so instead we have angsty whatever-the-hell and (maybe sexy, I've given up trying to guess Will's moods) fighting times will happen next chapter.

And thank you to confusedkayt for helping me work through some of the issues here!

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal go for a drive and a run. Just because there's a man chasing them during both activities doesn't mean this can't be a positive bonding experience.

(Lol, like they even know what those are.)

Chapter Notes

(Pretentious quotes get a brief(ish) explanation in the end notes.)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Night was breathing its last by the time they were ready to leave the house. The bugs were out, and the darkness had a pre-dawn haze to it. The air was already heavy with heat, promising that it would not be a good day for trekking through the jungle, no matter how sure Hannibal was of the footpath. Will saw him wince as he hefted his duffle bag, and stepped back inside to take it away from him.

“That’s really not necessary.”

“Apparently it is.”

“Will, I take exceptionally good care—”

“Six weeks before heavy lifting, Chiyoh said.”

“This is hardly—”

“Six weeks at a minimum. How many weeks has it been?”

“Five, but I am—”

“Hannibal the Cannibal?” Will inserted smoothly, before Hannibal could claim outright godhood.

To Will’s surprise, Hannibal’s eyes sparkled and a smile twitched at the corner of his mouth. “If you must use my more mythic moniker, yes.”

And you were hoping to nettle him. Will set their bags down and let the door close, leaning against its frame, an eyebrow quirked in invitation. “Mythic?”

“There’s great power in rhyme.” Hannibal straightened; he’d been favoring his left side. “Nietzsche once said that rhythm is a compulsion. There is a reason prayers are sung; rhyme and rhythm hold such sway over men that we hope they might ensnare the gods themselves. True poets know this, even now.”

Will cocked his head to the side. “ ‘Many lies tell the poets.’ ”

Hannibal’s smile held such open, unabashed affection that despite everything Will nearly blushed. “And yet a truth faces gravest danger not pitted against lies, but when it finds itself in agreement with the poet it would prefer to scorn.”

“I think we may be doing Chilton a far greater service than he deserves. ‘Hannibal the Cannibal’ is hardly poetry to catch the soul.”

Hannibal shrugged. Someday Will would have to figure out how he could make such a commonplace gesture so damn elegant. “Prophets from unlikely quarters, as they say. And I find there is an undeniable grandeur to immolation.”

“Not if you survive.”

“Yes, well.” Hannibal pursed his lips. “Some allowances must be made for the quirks of reality.”

Will snorted. “Life not symbolically resonant enough for you?”

“It has its moments.” Smile back at the corners of his eyes, Hannibal reached past Will and pulled open the door, stepping smoothly to the side. “After you, Will.”

Will swallowed a laugh, and instead nodded his head in concession of both the point and the echo of their long dead dynamic. However, not entirely ready to give up the round, he said, “Why thank you, Doctor,” as he passed through the open door and out into the pre-dawn air. Somehow the words came out sounding much less sarcastic than he’d intended. Almost playful.

It took Hannibal a moment to close the door and hurry after.

The moon had set, either while they spoke or sometime before. Dawn was far closer than Will had realized. How long had he slept? Why hadn’t Hannibal...

What? Offered the easy way out sooner? Let’s think real hard, see if we can figure it out.

No. Hannibal thought you’d have realized there was more than one exit. He wasn’t just running down the clock.

Uh huh. Sure.

“Will?” Hannibal waited beside the open trunk. “Would you like a hand after all?”

In response Will lifted each bag into the space, as carefully as he could given his right shoulder. Between the old stab wound from his cop days, the bullet from Jack, the bullet from Chiyoh, and the more recent stab from Dolarhyde, it was a mess of scar tissue and, no matter what Hannibal suggested, no amount of physical therapy was going to fix that.

Hannibal closed the trunk, and Will didn't protest this time when he took the driver's seat.

They hadn't reached the end of the driveway before Will heard another engine roar to life a little ways down the road.

They drove in silence for a long moment before Hannibal spoke.

"Would you blame the cat if the mouse followed him home and stretched itself across his table?"

"There was no way he could have followed us last night without being seen. He's not flaunting now; there's simply no point in trying to hide."

"But he did follow us." Hannibal pressed lightly, almost casually. "We gave him no cause, provided no threat."

Something like a smile twisted across Will's face. "Does the cat only pose a threat to the mouse as he eats it?"

Hannibal smiled. "You're avoiding the question, Will."

They were whipping around the curves of the mountain, not quite as fast as Will had gone the night before but far faster than anyone sane would consider safe—yet Michael Pont was never more than a twist or two behind.

"You said he was in private security for a few years. With who?"

"Triple Canopy."

Will nodded. He'd been hoping for some small nameless firm, but with their luck of course it had to be one of the most reputable companies on the east coast. "What division?"

"High Threat Protection."

Will bit back a curse. He was not about to give Hannibal the satisfaction of shocking him. "And you didn't think that was worth mentioning?" His voice only shook on the last word, and to his gratification he found that it was with anger, not fear. *Makes sense. You are with the most prodigious serial killer in recent history. What could you possibly be afraid of?*

"I said private security."

"Which does not automatically imply that he's had damn near special-ops training! Why is he even here?"

“In Argentina?” Hannibal tilted his head, as though in consideration. Will wanted to hit him. “Hard to say from the report, but it seems he was fired, likely black-listed. I can’t imagine he’d quit, after all the work it takes to reach such a position.”

The sun had begun to rise in earnest. “Could he be a bounty hunter?”

Hannibal gave Will a gentle, sympathetic smile. It sliced through his anger with cruel ease, while also deflating the hope he’d hardly had time to acknowledge was blooming in his chest. Of course, as soon as it was gone he recognized it, and took a moment to be horrified at all that it implied. *Is that really all you need now, to make murder okay?*

“No. I suspected he’d be at the opera, but he had no way of anticipating us.”

“We aren’t going to lose him by ditching the car and going on a little hike.”

“We might.” Hannibal glanced away from the road, considering Will for a moment before looking back. “We have rather limited options.”

Will laughed at that, but it came out something like a snarl. He dug his fingers into his thighs, just to give his hands something to do.

Options.

Hannibal was watching him. There was a curiosity there, a delight and fascination Will was entirely too familiar with. *Worse than a teenager. Might as well have goddamn cartoon-hearts for eyes.*

“Pull over.”

“Will...”

“I said pull over!”

“In a minute. We’re close.”

Will had no idea what he would have done if Hannibal agreed. Surrendered? The man chasing them was in the right, after all. *A retired cop...* In another life that could have been him. *Would be you, if you had a shred of anything decent left inside.* Molly’s smile flicked across his mind’s eye, the soft, loving thing she’d given him the first time he broke in front of her. She’d held him, and smiled like she didn’t even mind. *And she didn’t. And you...*

Hannibal was slowing down, ever so slightly.

“As soon as the car stops, we are going to run. Do you understand?”

“Yes.”

Suddenly Will felt very calm. Soon he would do whatever he was going to do, and it would be over. This time tomorrow there would be nothing to be done about his actions today. Clean up, of course, however it went, but nothing that could really change anything.

The car stopped. Will had already opened his door. He followed Hannibal into the jungle.

He'd worn the lightweight cargo pants Hannibal hated, and was immeasurably grateful for his own pettiness as branches whipped against his thighs and ferns snagged around his ankles. *Footpath my ass.* It was little more than a shifting gap between the trees. Of course Hannibal sprang along it easily, with calm but punishing speed. It shouldn't be possible for a man so large to move through such close spaces without so much as rustling a leaf.

Luckily, their pursuer was not so gifted, or Will might have believed their slip into the jungle had worked to lose him. But no, he crashed through the underbrush in the distance, undoubtedly following the trail of Will's blunders. Dawn had still only just begun to burrow through the canopy.

Ahead of him, Will saw Hannibal's shoulders tense. It was the only warning he had before the man froze, and was only just enough to keep Will from plowing into him full force. As it was, he stumbled and fell against Hannibal's back. Hannibal hardly twitched at the impact. Will made to move around him but Hannibal's hand shot out and grabbed his wrist in a crushing grip that told Will to be still. Will obeyed. Looking over Hannibal's shoulder, he saw the reason for their interrupted flight lying directly across their path, less than four feet away.

A massive black and brown viper, wrapped protectively around a clutch of eggs. It stared straight at them. As Will watched, it raised its head, arched back into an elegant strike position.

Wordlessly Hannibal released Will's wrist. Will understood, and began to back away slowly. Hannibal followed, eyes never leaving the snake. It was only when Will stepped carelessly, snapping a twig underfoot, that he registered the silence around them, and realized what it meant.

"A Fer de Lance," Hannibal murmured, turning to face him as they came to a stop. "*Terciopelo*, in its homeland. Lovely, don't you think?"

"Elegant," Will said. He thought of Alana, of protection and the things Hannibal respected. A branch snapped and he turned instinctively towards the sound.

A flash of light.

Two more, and he had already turned away but the damage was done. *I was right, not nearly as strong enough flash for a distant shot at night.* The thought felt feverish, hysterical. *But it'll be fine, just fine, for a dusky jungle. Dappled jungle. Dormant. Dea—*

"Will," Hannibal repeated. Will came back to himself with a start, and realized Hannibal had a hand on either side of his face, gently forcing eye contact. He relaxed somewhat when he got it, and dropped his hands from Will's face. "He is heading back to his car. It is important that you stay here. You will not find your way back on your own, and I might not find you if you become lost."

Will didn't look away when Hannibal removed his hands. Both men shifted, prompted by the heat in Will's glare. A small circling, each always a predator and reminded of that fact. "And where will you be?"

Apparently Will's anger was enough to convince Hannibal that Will was present enough not to go wandering off into the jungle, because Hannibal nodded as though in agreement. "I am trusting you to stay, Will."

And with that, he dashed off through the trees, moving even faster than before.

You were holding him back. The voice was mocking, but the thought had hardly finished before a quieter voice said, half hiding behind the other, *Nothing's holding him back now.*

Will turned, trying to get his bearings. Everything was trees, and moss, and black soil. Reaching ferns. *Must not have left such a blundering trail after all.*

You know he's going to kill him.

The trees cast deep shadows, some of which didn't seem bound to their creators but shifted beyond any natural compulsion. One broke away. Grew antlers, pawed and tore at the ground, lifting sharp furrows in angry agitation. It held Will's gaze, feathers rustling.

A gunshot rang out, and the form of the ravenstag broke into thin smoke at the sound. Above, a mass of birds began to scream their displeasure. Will hardly noticed.

He was already running.

Chapter End Notes

Misc. Notes:

Sorry this took forever and came out so short! The upcoming scene was supposed to go at the end, but everything went long and I'm super busy, so I figured might as well just post this in the meantime. *shrugs*

Also, "Terciopelo" means velvet, and is the name for a Fer du Lance used by many South American countries. If you have any snake questions, feel free to ask in the comments! (or any Homer/Nietzsche questions, for that matter, because man I could go on for *days*.)

Quote Explanations:

Hannibal doesn't quote Nietzsche directly, but the bit he's referencing is from section 84 of Book II of *The Gay Science*, titled "*On the origins of poetry*":

"Above all, men desired the utility of the elemental and overpowering effect that we experience as we listen to music: rhythm is a compulsion; it engenders an unconquerable urge to yield and join in; not only our feet follow the beat but the soul does, too—probably, one surmised, the soul of the gods as well! Thus one tried to *compel* the gods by using rhythm to force their hand: poetry was thrown at them like a magical snare." (Nietzsche's emphasis)

Will, like the snarky little snark he is, is quoting Homer in reference to the end of that same section:

"In sum: What could have been more useful for the ancient, superstitious type of man than rhythm? It enabled one to do anything—to advance some work magically; to force a god to appear, to be near, and to listen; to mold the future in accordance with one's will; to cleanse one's own soul from some excess (of anxiety, mania, pity, or vengefulness)—and not only one's own soul but also that of the move evil demon: without verse one was nothing; by means of verse one almost became a god. Such a fundamental feeling can never be erased entirely; and even now, after men have fought against such superstitions for thousands of years, the wisest among us are still occasionally fooled by rhythm—if only insofar as we sometimes consider an idea truer simply because it has a metrical form and presents itself with a divine skip and jump. Isn't it rather amusing that to this day the most serious philosophers, however strict they may be in questions of certainty, still call on what poets have said in order to lend their ideas force and credibility? And yet it is more dangerous for a truth when a poet agrees than when he contradicts it. For as Homer says: 'Many lies tell the poets.' "

And Hannibal, not to be out-snarked and *thrilled* Will's playing his pretentious little game, responds with an echo of same. (Also because I just find Nietzsche hilarious, and love the whole "we shouldn't rely on pithy aphorisms or believe something just because a poet says it—but don't take my word for it, here's one of *the most famous poets of all time* to say it better and more succinctly than I ever could!" thing.)

End Notes

Your comments give me life! They are about 60% of the reason I'm getting this done as quickly as I am. (Which is not quickly at all by most people's standards, but I'm writing a lot of other things and this fic is supposed to be getting the short end of the deal... except getting feedback is addictive and so I prioritize it probably higher than I should.)

This is part 1 of 3 (plus the prologue *Bloodied, Torn, and Somewhat Hopeful*, and probably an epilogue.)

Also the 10 chapter total is a rough estimate, might be one or two more or less.

Oh, and I'm awritersrejections on tumblr. Come hang out with me there!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!